

HOLMES AND PEDRICK.

[To accompany Bill H. R. No. 423.]

MARCH 23, 1860.

Mr. S. MOORE, from the Committee on Claims, made the following

REPORT.

*The Committee on Claims, to whom was referred the petition of Philip B. Holmes and William Pedrick, have had the same under consideration, and beg leave to adopt as their report the one heretofore made by the Committee on Naval Affairs of the 28th Congress, and re-adopted by the Committee on Claims of the last Congress, as follows:*

That the petitioners are the inventors of the machine referred to in their petition, and have secured their right to the invention by patent. It is proved, to the satisfaction of the committee, that the machine in question, which is used for cutting raw hides into strips to be laid up into cordage, is a very valuable improvement in the manufacture of that article, inasmuch as it cuts an entire hide into a single strip of uniform size, and thereby both facilitates the manufacture of rope of that material, and improves its quality, making also a considerable saving in the cost of cutting and laying up the strands. The quantity of hide rope annually required for the use of the navy is estimated by the Bureau of Construction and Equipment at 5,750 pounds, and the usual cost has been twenty-nine cents per pound—the hides costing from eleven to twelve cents, and the cutting and laying up about eighteen. The machine in use in the navy yard at Charlestown, Massachusetts, cut the hides for 5,782 pounds of cordage during the year ending February 1, 1844, and at a saving of from twenty-five to fifty per cent (according to the estimates of different witnesses) on the entire cost of the rope.

It further appears that at the time of the invention of the machine in question the petitioners were in the employment of the government at the navy yard at Charlestown as machinists, and constructed the machine there used for and at the expense of the United States—receiving, however, no compensation, except their daily wages as machinists; and that the board of navy commissioners refused to make them any compensation for the invention or use of the machine, because it was invented and constructed while the inventors were under pay in the

public service, and because they allowed it to be used by the government before securing their right by patent.

In the opinion of the committee, this fact does not constitute a valid objection to the claim of the petitioners. They have received compensation only for the time and labor spent in the construction of the machine, and have not been in any way rewarded for the exercise of the mechanical ingenuity requisite for its contrivance. Had the machine been invented and patented before the petitioners were employed by the government, it could not have been used without a purchase of the right. The petitioners were employed not as *inventors*, but as laborers—not to *contrive* but to *build* machinery; and there does not appear to be any equitable ground for denying them a compensation for that mechanical ingenuity and skill in contrivance, which the nature of their employment did not compel them to exercise, but which has nevertheless been exercised with great advantage to the public service.

According to the data above given, the United States save, by this invention, a sum which cannot be estimated at less than five hundred dollars annually, to say nothing of the superior quality of the article produced.

The committee report the accompanying bill for the relief of the said Philip B. Holmes and William Pedrick, and unanimously recommend its passage.